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# Gardens and Parks in Constantinople

HENRY MAGUIRE

The many gardens and parks of Constantinople are primarily known to historians today through descriptions in texts.<sup>1</sup> The actual remains of gardens are scant, though not, as we shall see, nonexistent.<sup>2</sup> As for the texts, they take many forms, from brief mentions in histories and chronicles, to longer ekphrastic descriptions in prose or in verse. On the face of it, the ekphraseis of the green spaces of the city should be our most useful source for their understanding and reconstruction, but they present us with problems of interpretation. At one time, scholars used to value the ekphraseis as repositories of factual information about lost works of art and architecture, but they were frequently frustrated by the perceived distortions and inaccuracies produced by the rhetorical genre of ekphrasis and its conventions.<sup>3</sup> Now, a newer generation of scholars sees the ekphraseis in a more positive, but not positivist, light, as expressions of the Byzantine imagination, more relevant to mentality and ideology than to concrete reality.<sup>4</sup> In either case, the Byzantine texts have been viewed as suspect guides to the physical reconstruction of lost monuments. My intention in this paper is to use the topic of gardens and parks in Constantinople to propose a middle way of reading the ekphraseis. I will argue

This paper owes much to the assistance of Robert Ousterhout and Engin Akyürek, which is here gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>1</sup>The modern literature on Byzantine gardens is now extensive. For a survey of the bibliography, see A. Littlewood, "The Scholarship of Byzantine Gardens," in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C., 2001). On the gardens of Constantinople, see especially A. R. Littlewood, "Gardens of the Palaces," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1997), 13–38; N. P. Ševčenko, "Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park," in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Byzantine Garden Culture*. On later developments, see G. Necipoğlu, "The Suburban Landscape of Sixteenth-Century Istanbul as a Mirror of Classical Ottoman Garden Culture," in *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, ed. A. Petruccioli (Leiden, 1997), 32–71.

<sup>2</sup>See C. Barber, "Reading the Garden in Byzantium: Nature and Sexuality," *BMGS* 16 (1992): 1–19, esp. 1: "The subject of the Byzantine garden is primarily to be tackled from texts, and is very much a subject of its texts."

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (Harmondsworth, 1970), 161: "Many of the poems and epigrams referring to works of art may be dismissed as clichés by which the scholar displayed his learning." On the role of rhetoric, see C. Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," *DOP* 17 (1963): 55–75, esp. 64–68.

<sup>4</sup>See, especially, L. James and R. Webb, "'To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places': Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium," *Art History* 14 (1991): 1–17; Barber, "Reading the Garden in Byzantium," esp. 1–5; L. James, "'Pray not to Fall into Temptation and Be on Your Guard': Pagan Statues in Christian Constantinople," *Gesta* 35.1 (1996): 12–20, esp. 14.

that these texts were not completely divorced from the works of art that they describe. In spite of modern depredations, enough survives in Istanbul of some Byzantine gardens to show that the descriptions of those spaces by Byzantine writers were at least partly accurate and supportive of a literal reading. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the ekphraseis were not simply objective descriptions but constructions that reflected the cultures of their composers and audiences. The second aim of my paper, therefore, will be briefly to illustrate a change in Byzantine attitudes toward gardens, and indeed landscape in general, between late antiquity and the Middle Ages. This change of outlook structured the Byzantine *perceptions* of garden spaces, whatever their actual form.

This paper will concentrate on four parks and gardens where texts and topography can be studied together. I will begin with two suburban parks, the Philopation and the Aretai, and then move inside the city to consider the Mesokepion and the Mangana, both in the area of the Great Palace.

The Philopation is the most frequently mentioned of the parks of the city.<sup>5</sup> The earliest record of it is from the ninth century, when the future emperor Basil I killed a large wolf that had startled his hunting party by rushing out at them from some woods “in the place called Philopation.”<sup>6</sup> The Philopation seems to have remained in use as an imperial hunting ground until the fall of the city to the Latins at the end of the twelfth century. The best description of the area is the one provided by Odo of Deuil, the chaplain of Louis VII, who saw the park in 1147, during the Second Crusade. Although Odo’s description is well known, it is worth quoting in full:

Before the city stood a spacious and impressive ring of walls enclosing various kinds of game and including canals and ponds. Also, inside were certain hollows and caves which, in lieu of forests, furnished lairs for the animals. In that lovely place certain palaces which the emperors had built as their springtime retreat are conspicuous for their splendor.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the details in this description are confirmed by Byzantine writers. George the Monk, for example, speaks of the “ravines and hollows” of the Philopation, in which Jacovitzes, the henchman of Basil I, had a fatal accident while hunting.<sup>8</sup> Kinnamos refers to the Philopation as “an imperial dwelling place,” which “is overgrown with leaves and produces rich grass” and “bears everywhere a green appearance.”<sup>9</sup> The use of the suburban palace of the Philopation for imperial receptions is evoked by a passage in Choniates that speaks of Alexios Angelos’s holding court there while sitting freshly bathed on a couch spangled with gold.<sup>10</sup>

On the basis of these descriptions we should imagine the Philopation as an enclosed

<sup>5</sup>On the Philopation, see, most recently Littlewood, “Gardens of the Palaces,” 37–38, and Ševčenko, “Wild Animals,” who give the earlier literature.

<sup>6</sup>εἰς τὸ λεγόμενον Φιλοπάτιον. *Vita Basilii*, 14, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1838), 231–32.

<sup>7</sup>*De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 3, ed. and trans. V. G. Berry (New York, 1965), 48.

<sup>8</sup>Φάραγγας καὶ βοθύνους. *Imperium Basilii Macedonis*, 2, in *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1838), 839.

<sup>9</sup>τῷ καταντικρὺ τειχέων βασιλικῷ γεγονῶς ἐνδαιτήματι . . . τὴν φύλλοις κομῶσαν πόαν τε δαυλῇ ἀνιείσαν (ἀμφιλαφὴς γὰρ ὁ χώρος καὶ ἐπὶ χλοὸν ἀπανταχῇ φέρει τὸ πρόσωπον). *Historiae*, 2.14, ed. A. Meineke, CSHB (Bonn, 1836), 74–75; translation from C. M. Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus by John Kinnamos* (New York, 1976), 63.

<sup>10</sup>*Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. J.-L. van Dieten (Berlin–New York, 1975), 1:457.

park, containing not only a natural landscape for hunting but also constructed features such as canals, pools, and pavilions. Of the latter nothing survives today, but at least we know the approximate location of the park, which lay immediately outside the walls of the city. In the map accompanying Raymond Janin's book on the topography of Constantinople, the Philopation straddles the valley of the Lycus, just outside the land walls of the city, about two kilometers from their northern end (Fig. 1).<sup>11</sup> Other authors, however, have placed the estate further to the north, nearer to the Golden Horn.<sup>12</sup> There is no doubt that the Philopation was close to the land walls. Kinnamos says that when Conrad reached Byzantium in 1147, he was able to survey the walls of the city from the Philopation, and even to see that the people standing on the outworks were unarmed. According to Kinnamos, Conrad decided immediately that the city was impregnable, and, being unable to take it, swiftly crossed the bridge across the Golden Horn.<sup>13</sup> Another passage, in Niketas Choniates' *Historia* suggests that the plains above the Philopation were visible from the Blachernai palace. Speaking of Isaak Angelos, Choniates wrote:

Often, he [Isaak] held newly wrought arrows in his hands and said that he would have them sharpened in order to pierce the hearts of the Germans. Then he would point to a window of the palace of the Blachernai through which were visible the plains outside the battlements that were suitable for horsemanship and that sloped down to the Philopatia, and he would say that the missiles would be shot through it, to strike down the Germans, thus moving his listeners to laughter.<sup>14</sup>

From this passage it is evident that the higher ground above the Philopation could be seen from the palace at the Blachernai, at the northern end of the land walls. Presumably, the sloping plains referred to by Choniates are the ones that descend toward the north, to the flat ground alongside the Golden Horn; from the Blachernai it would have been impossible to see the slopes on the southern side, those that descend to the Lycus, as they are over the brow of the hill.

The modern view from the Blachernai palace takes in a multilane expressway, but we should imagine that the view was once pleasant enough for the construction of a belvedere adjoining the palace, on top of the so-called Tower of Isaak Angelos (Fig. 2). It is debatable whether this is the very tower that Niketas Choniates says was built at the Blachernai as a residence by Isaak Angelos from the spoils of demolished churches.<sup>15</sup> However, it is presently provided with a spacious room at the top with generously proportioned arched windows. These opened, on the south and west sides, onto balconies con-

<sup>11</sup>R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1964), 144–45 and plan I.

<sup>12</sup>C. Emereau, "Le Philopation, le 'Vincennes' de Byzance," *EO* 21 (1922): 181–85; A. M. Schneider, *Byzanz: Vorarbeiten zur Topographie und Archäologie der Stadt*, *IstForsch* 8 (Berlin, 1936), 81.

<sup>13</sup>*Historiae*, 2.14, Bonn ed., 74–75.

<sup>14</sup>καὶ βέλη νεοχάλκευτα φέρων πολλάκις ἐν ταῖν χερσὶν ταύτ' ἔφασκεν ἀκονᾶν κατὰ καρδίας παγησόμενα τῶν Ἀλαμανῶν· δεικνύων δὲ καὶ παράθυρον ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις τῶν Βλαχερνῶν, δι' ἧς ὁρατὰ ἦν τὰ ἱππῆλατα πεδία τὰ ἐξωθεν τῶν ἐπάλξεων ἐν τοῖς Φιλοπατίοις καθυπτιάζοντα, ἐκ ταύτης ἔλεγε μέλλειν ἀφιέναι τὰ βέλεμνα, βάλλειν τε καὶ καταβάλλειν τοὺς Ἀλαμανοὺς, ὥστε καὶ ἐν γέλωτι ἤγετο τοῖς ἀκούουσι τὰ λεγόμενα. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 1:404; adapted from H. J. Magoulas, trans. *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984), 222.

<sup>15</sup>A. van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople. The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London, 1899), 143–45.

spicuously supported on reused columns projecting from the walls. This mirador must have provided a fine view of the landscape of the Philopation.

Further clues concerning the location of the Philopation can be found in the ekphrasis by Nikolaos Mesarites of the church of the Holy Apostles, which he composed around the year 1200. Mesarites said that someone who climbed up onto “the parapets and towers” of the Holy Apostles could see the Philopation, together with its activities of hunting and the marshaling of troops. “See,” declared Mesarites, “the ruler has gone out for the salvation of his people, and he is staying in the emperor’s tents (*skenas*), which stand opposite the emperor’s palace. . . .”<sup>16</sup> Presumably the palace opposite which the tents were pitched was the Blachernai, unless Mesarites was referring to a palace within the park of the Philopation itself.

Another suburban park that we know from the written sources is the Aretai,<sup>17</sup> which, in the words of Anna Komnena was located “near the city.” About the Aretai, she wrote: “It is elevated above the plain, and, to those standing and looking on it from below, gives the appearance of rising into a ridge, inclining one of its flanks towards the sea, and the other towards Byzantium, and the two others to the north and to the west, being exposed to all the winds.”<sup>18</sup> She goes on to say that the place was delightful, temperate, and continually provided with pure water, although in her day it had been denuded of trees. It had buildings, which Anna describes as splendid and worthy of emperors, who would briefly take their leisure there. She tells us that this palace had been built as a retreat by Romanos IV Diogenes, who reigned 1068–71.<sup>19</sup> However, it seems that some kind of palace already existed on the site of the Aretai before the time of this emperor, for the poet Christopher of Mytilene, who is otherwise known to have been active in the first half of the eleventh century, devoted an epigram to a stone statue of Hercules, which he saw “standing in the palace of the Aretai.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Anna, who was writing some eighty years after the death of Romanos IV may have been mistaken, or else Romanos restored an existing palace. The palace and park of the Aretai are probably described in an 85-line ekphrastic poem by John Geometres, who was active in the second half of the tenth century.<sup>21</sup> Although the poem does not have a *lemma* specifically identifying the subject as the Aretai, the third line appears to have a punning allusion to the site, for it reads,

<sup>16</sup>ὅρα μοι τοῖνυν· ἐξῆλθεν εἰς σωτηρίαν λαοῦ ὁ κρατῶν καὶ παραμένει ἐπὶ τὰς κατέναντι μὲν τῶν ἀνακτόρων ἀποδυσταμένους . . . Βασιλείου Σκηναί. . . . καὶ ὁρατὸς τῆνικαῦτα μετὰ σύμπαντος τοῦ στρατεύματος τῷ παρὰ τὰς ἐπαλξεις ἱσταμένῳ τοῦ νεῶ τε καὶ τὰ πυργώματα. *Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles*, 5.1–6, ed. and trans. G. Downey, *TAPS*, n.s., 47.6 (1957): 864, 898.

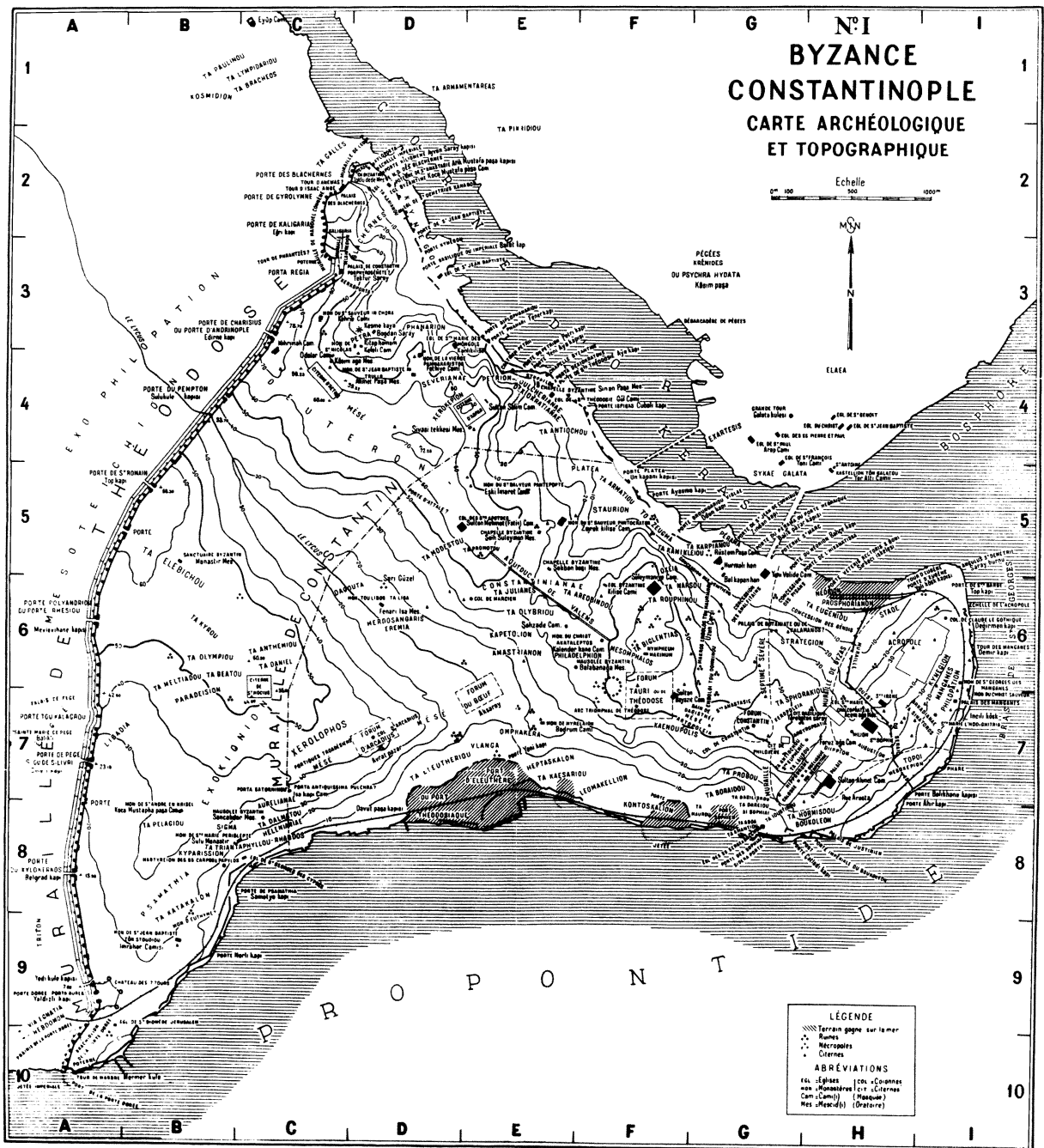
<sup>17</sup>H. Maguire, “A Description of the Aretai Palace and Its Garden,” *Journal of Garden History* 10.4 (1990): 209–13.

<sup>18</sup>τόπος δὲ οὗτος ἀγχοῦ τῆς πόλεως διακείμενος, ὑπερκείμενος μὲν τῆς πεδίαδος καὶ τοῖς κάτωθεν ἱσταμένοις καὶ πρὸς τοῦτον ὀρώσιν εἰς λοφίαν ἀνατεινόμενος καὶ τὴν ἑτέραν μὲν πλευρὰν πρὸς θάλατταν ἀπονέουσαν, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἑτέραν πρὸς τὸ Βυζάντιον, ταῖς δὲ γε λοιπαῖς δυσὶ πρὸς ἄρκτον καὶ δύσιν, παντὶ ἀνέμῳ καταπνεόμενος. *Alexiad*, 2.8.5, ed. B. Leib (Paris, 1937), 1:90.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>[Εἰς τὸν ἀνδριάντα τοῦ Ἡρ] ακλέως, τὸν ἱστάμενον ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ τῶν Ἀρετῶν. E. Kurtz, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios* (Leipzig, 1903), 99, no. 143. On the dated poems of Christopher of Mytilene, see E. Follieri, “Le poesie di Cristoforo Mitileneo come fonte storica,” *ZRVI* 8.2 (1964): 133–48.

<sup>21</sup>Ed. J. A. Cramer, *Anecdota graeca e codd. manuscriptis bibliothecae regiae parisiensis* (Oxford, 1841; repr. Hildesheim, 1967), 4:276–78. On the identification of the subject, see Maguire, “Aretai Palace.” On the career of John Geometres, see M. Lauxtermann, *The Byzantine Epigram in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Amsterdam, 1994), 150–69. See also idem, “John Geometres—Poet and Scholar,” *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 356–80, esp. 376–78.



1 Constantinople (after R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine, développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. [Paris, 1964], plan I)



2 Belvedere, "Tower of Isaak Angelos"



3 Ceramic bowl decorated with creatures of the hunt, ancient Corinth, Archaeological Museum



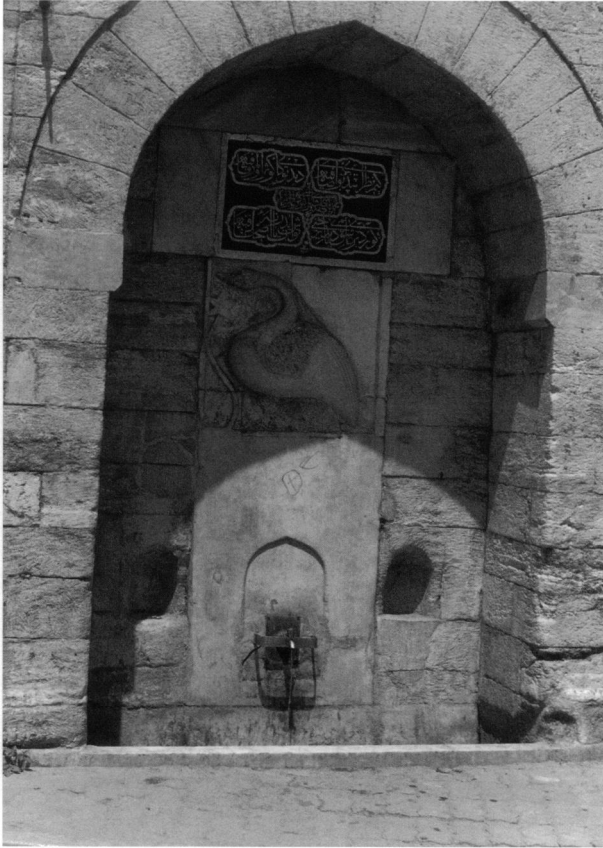


4 Istanbul, satellite view (after D. Kuban, *Istanbul, an Urban History: Byzantium, Constantinopolis, Istanbul* [Istanbul, 1996])



5 Inner land wall of Constantinople, view of Tower 1 from the southwest, ca. 1870 (after B. Meyer-Plath and A. M. Schneider, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel* [Berlin, 1943], 2: pl. 25)

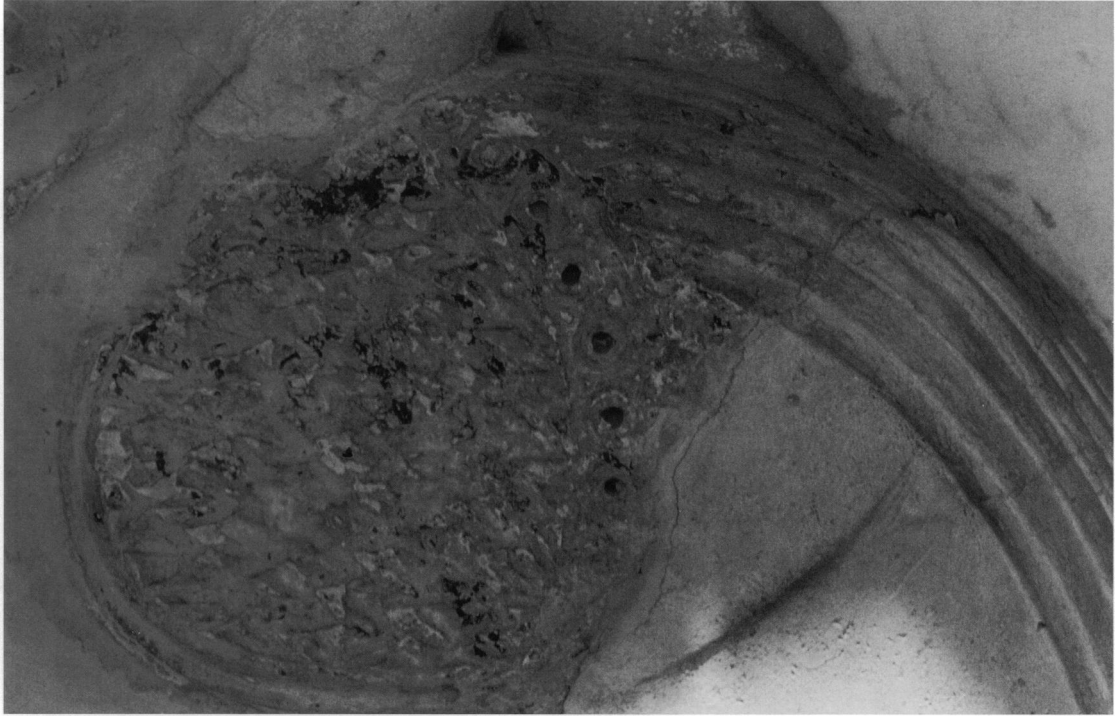




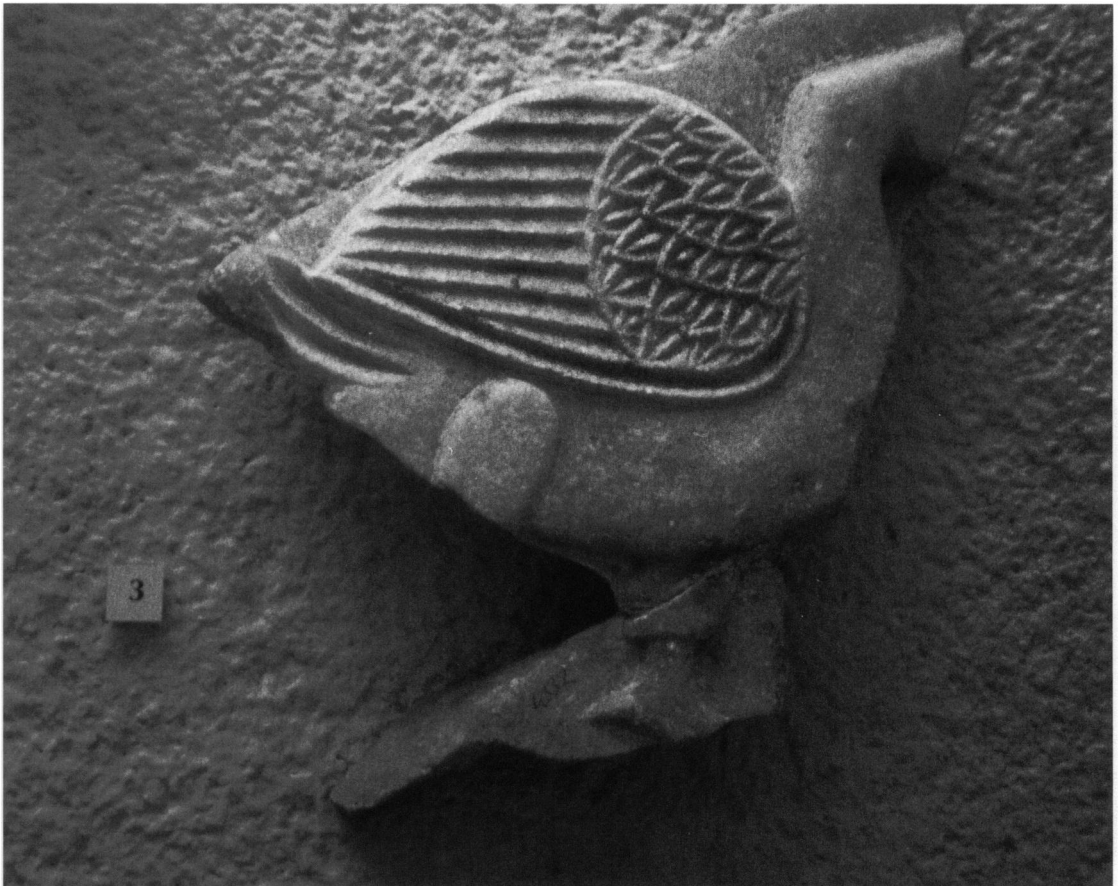
6 Istanbul, Kazlı Çeşme, Byzantine sculpture



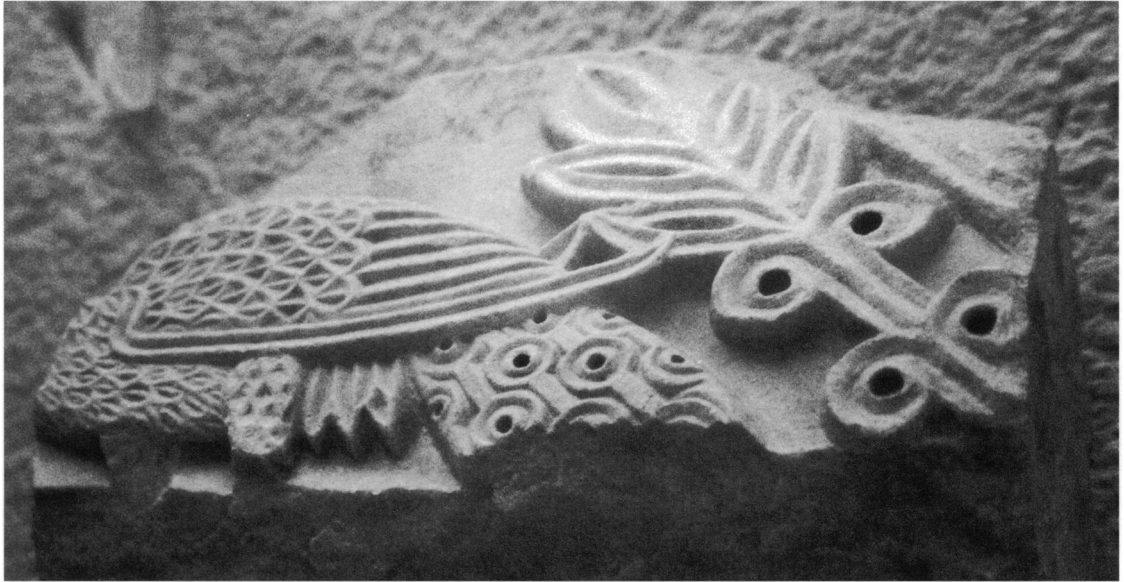
7 Istanbul, Kazlı Çeşme, Byzantine sculpture, detail, upper block



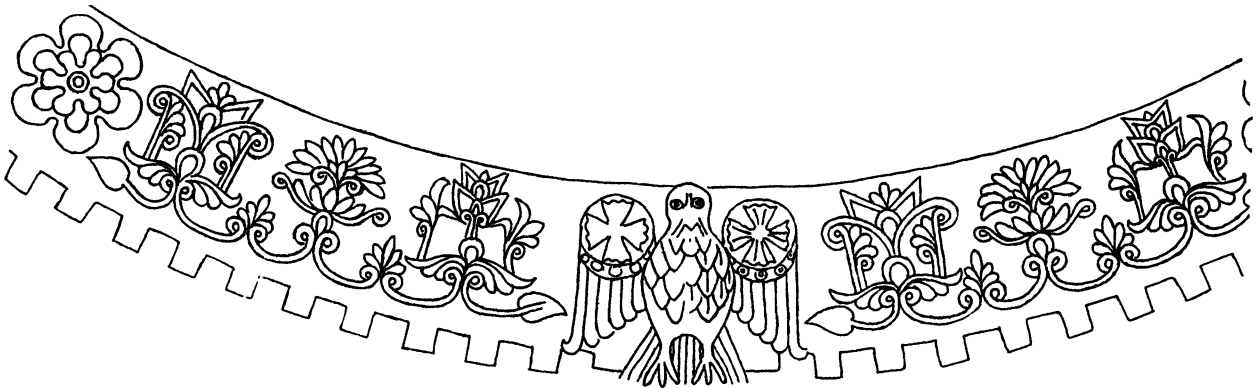
8 Istanbul, Kazlı Çeşme, Byzantine sculpture, upper block, detail, wing feathers of goose



9 Carving from Fenari Isa Camii (church of Constantine Lips), Istanbul, Archaeological Museum



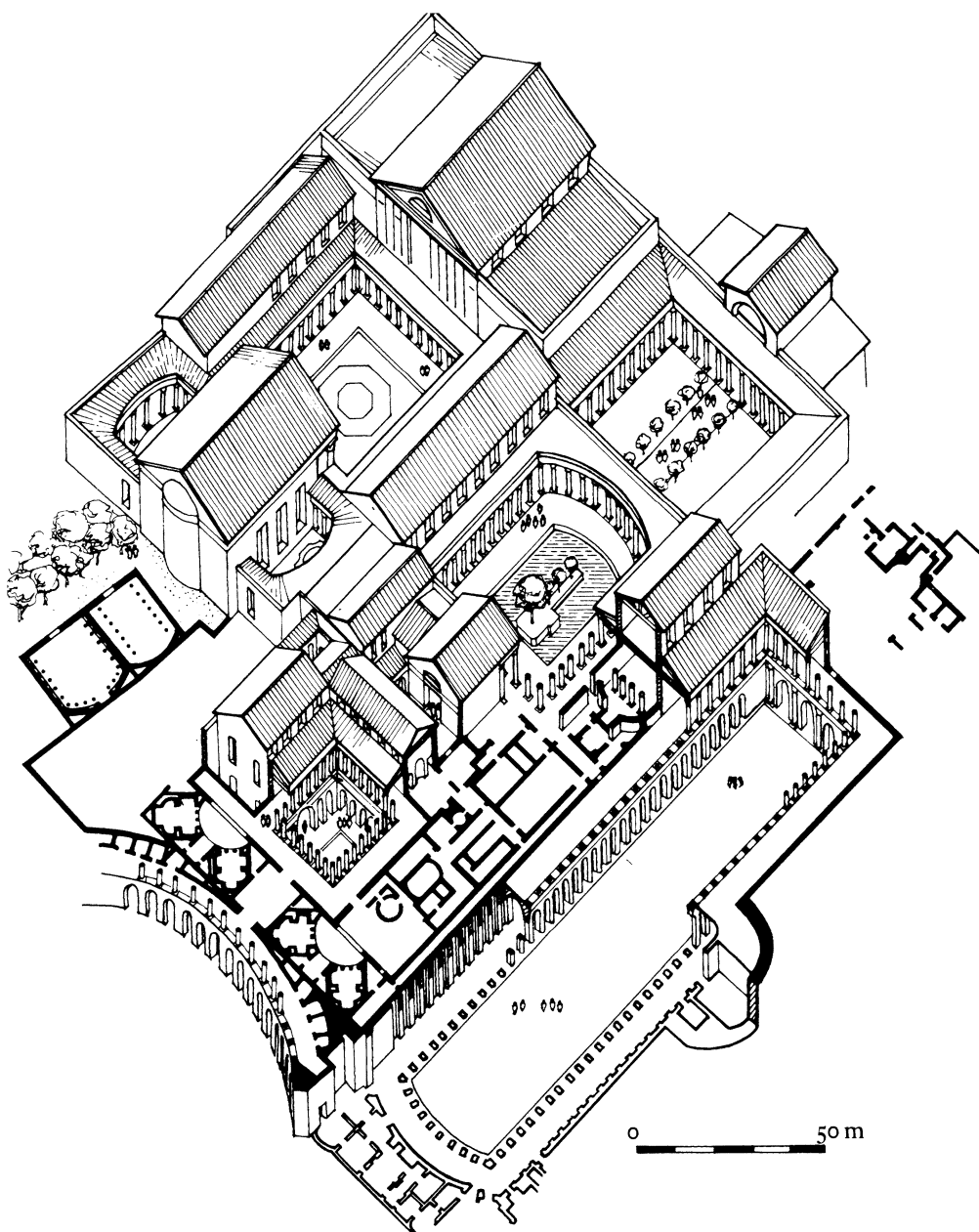
10 Carving from Fenari Isa Camii (church of Constantine Lips), Istanbul, Archaeological Museum



11 Detail, dome cornice, Fenari Isa Camii (church of Constantine Lips), Istanbul (after T. Macridy, "The Monastery of Lips and the Burials of the Palaeologi," *DOP* 18 [1964]: fig. 18)



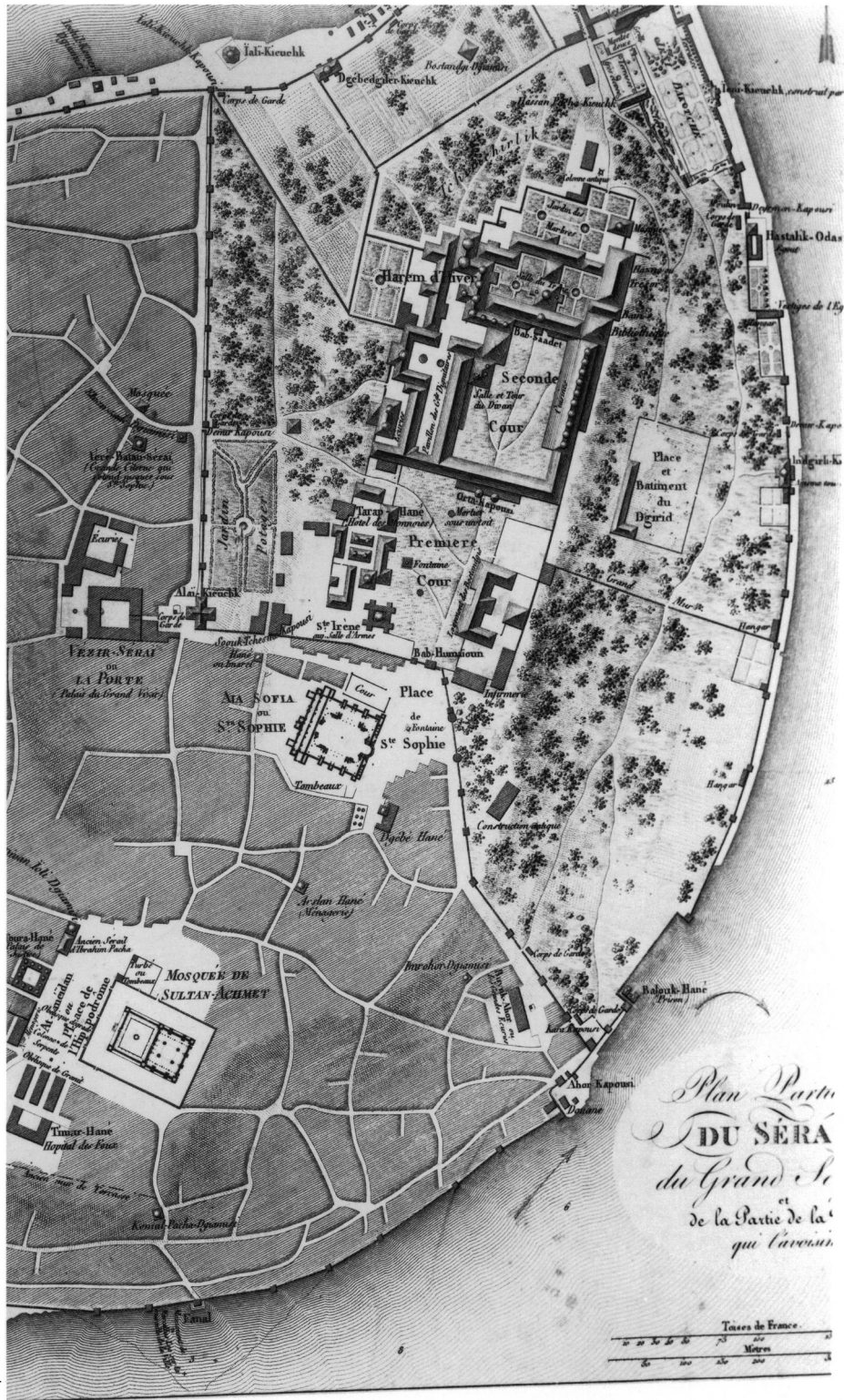
12 Bronze goose, London, British Museum (photo: courtesy of the museum)



13 Flavian Palace, reconstruction, Rome, Palatine (after J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture* [Harmondsworth, 1981], fig. 37)







15 Plan of the Topkapı complex (after A. Melling, *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople* [Paris, 1819])





16 Istanbul, Mangana gardens, terrace wall at southern end (labeled A in Fig. 14)



17 Istanbul, Mangana gardens, terrace wall at northern end (labeled B in Fig. 14)



18 Istanbul, Mangana gardens, view to the lower level from the north

"The virtues [*aretai*] not only of earth but of all creations came together here."<sup>22</sup> Like the park described by Anna Komnena, the Aretai of the poem occupied an elevated position, "rising . . . a small height from the ground."<sup>23</sup> The poem describes the virtues of the site in extravagant terms, as boasting beautifully decorated buildings, sculptures more accomplished than those of Praxiteles, Phidias, Lysippos, and Polykleitos, and water-works, including both streams pouring from the rock and formal fountains. According to Geometres, all this was set within a natural landscape that included pastures, peaks, ravines, hollows, and wooded vales. The park rejoiced in the songs of birds and cicadas, and in the leaping of game, specifically hares and roe-deer. Since the park has now vanished, a twelfth-century ceramic bowl from Corinth may serve to illustrate its charms; here can be seen the characteristic creatures of the game park, the deer, the hares, and the birds against a background of foliage (Fig. 3).<sup>24</sup>

Where, then, was the park of the Aretai located? According to A. M. Schneider it may have been situated in the area of Topçular, facing the northern portion of the land walls, at the position numbered 1 on the satellite view shown in Figure 4.<sup>25</sup> But, as Janin pointed out, such a site does not correspond well with Anna Komnena's description, for she says that one flank of the park faced the sea, which is some distance from this point—about 4.5 kilometers. Instead, Janin proposed that the Aretai should be placed some 3 kilometers north of the ancient Hebdomon, a little more than 3 kilometers west of the southern portion of the land walls, at the position marked 2 on Figure 4.<sup>26</sup> The matter can be resolved, I believe, by reference to another of the poems of John Geometres, which describes a fortification tower.<sup>27</sup> In this case, we know exactly which area he is describing, because the tower of his poem can be identified as Tower 1 on the inner line of the Theodosian land walls. This tower stands at the extreme southern end of the land walls, at the point where they adjoin the sea wall.<sup>28</sup> Geometres describes the tower as standing at the junction of land and sea.<sup>29</sup> He also specifies that it is hexagonal in its upper parts;<sup>30</sup> Tower 1 of the land walls is pentagonal below, where it abuts the curtain wall, but hexagonal above, where it rises clear of the wall (Fig. 5). The occasion for the composition of Geometres' poem may have been the restoration of the land walls by Basil II and Constantine VIII after the earthquake of 989, for the poem appears to refer to this tremor,<sup>31</sup> which, according to Leo the Deacon, brought down "the towers of Byzan-

<sup>22</sup> οὐκ ἀρεταὶ γῆς, ἀλλὰ πάντων κτισμάτων  
συνῆλθον ὧδε.

Ed. Cramer, 276, lines 5–6.

<sup>23</sup> καὶ μικρὸν ἐκ γῆς ὥσπερ ὕψος ἡρμένη. Ed. Cramer, 276, line 14.

<sup>24</sup> H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom, eds., *The Glory of Byzantium*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1997), 268, no. 190.

<sup>25</sup> Schneider, *Byzanz*, 81.

<sup>26</sup> Janin, *Constantinople*, 443 and plan VIII.

<sup>27</sup> Ed. Cramer, 278–80. On the identification of the subject, see H. Maguire, "The Beauty of Castles: A Tenth-Century Description of a Tower at Constantinople," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.* 17 (1993–94): 21–24.

<sup>28</sup> On the architecture of this tower, see F. Krischen, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel* (Berlin, 1938), 1: pls. 40–41; B. Meyer-Plath and A. M. Schneider, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel. Zweiter Teil* (Berlin, 1943), pls. 1, 4, 12, 25; W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen, 1977), figs. 328–29.

<sup>29</sup> Ed. Cramer, 279, line 3.

<sup>30</sup> Ed. Cramer, 279, line 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ed. Cramer, 278, line 28.

tium.”<sup>32</sup> The hexagonal upper stage of Tower 1 still bears an inscription naming the emperors Basil and Constantine.<sup>33</sup>

For our purposes, John Geometres’ poem about the tower is significant for its last two lines. They read, “Do you wish to know the whole prospect of the tower? Raise your eyes straight, look from nearby at the virtues (*aretas*) of the earth.”<sup>34</sup> If this is taken as another reference to the park of the Aretai, then the park should lie near the southern end of the land walls, near Tower 1, and within sight of it. There is, indeed, a well-watered hill that rises into a ridge opposite the land walls at this point, in the area marked 3 on the satellite view in Figure 4. Like the site described by Anna Komnena, this hill has views of the sea and of the city on its south and east sides, respectively. The location proposed by Janin, north of Hebdomon (at 2 on the satellite view in Fig. 4), seems to be too far to the west; because of the intervening ridges, it would not be easy to see Janin’s site from the land walls. Also, it cannot be described as “nearby” to the fortifications. In conclusion, it may be proposed that the park of the Aretai occupied a position analogous to the Philopation, near the walls, but at their southern rather than northern end.

It is not possible to determine when the park was first laid out, but John Geometres referred to the features he described as a “new creation”;<sup>35</sup> this statement suggests that they should be ascribed to the second half of the tenth century.

There is one other intriguing piece of evidence, kindly brought to my attention by Robert Ousterhout—namely a fragmentary relief portraying a goose, which is now incorporated into an Ottoman fountain at the base of the hill that I am identifying here as the Aretai (Figs. 6–8). According to its inscription, the Ottoman fountain, known as Kazlı Çeşme, was constructed in 1537.<sup>36</sup> The fountain and its sculpture were both recorded by the seventeenth-century traveler Evliya Çelebi in his section on the suburbs of Istanbul. Describing the pungent, but well-watered, quarter of the tanners, outside the Yedikule, Evliya Çelebi remarks, “Outside this suburb is a fountain, where on a square piece of marble is engraved a goose, of admirable workmanship.”<sup>37</sup> This sculpture, as we see it now, is carved on two large interlocking blocks of marble that are incorporated into the back of the fountain (Fig. 6). The upper block is carved with a plump goose, standing in front of a leaf on a curved stem (Fig. 7). The surface of the lower, and larger, piece is now smooth, except for the lower part of the leaf stem, which is carved at its upper left, and the arched frame for the water outlet, the profile of which is Ottoman (Fig. 6). Even though the body of the goose has been damaged and restored, enough remains of it to show that it was related to Byzantine sculptures of the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the carving on our fountain we find a distinctive combination of naturalistic and unnatu-

<sup>32</sup> τὰ τε πυργώματα τοῦ Βυζαντίου πρὸς γῆν κατερίπωσε. *Historia*, ed. C. B. Hase, CSHB (Bonn, 1828), 175–76.

<sup>33</sup> Meyer-Plath and Schneider, *Landmauer*, 123.

<sup>34</sup> Θέλεις τὸ πύργου πᾶν πρόσωπον μαθάνειν;  
Αἶρε πρὸς ὀρθὸν ὄμμα, βλέψον ἐγγύθεν  
τὰς ἀρετὰς γῆς.

Ed. Cramer, 279, line 33–280, line 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ed. Cramer, 276, line 3.

<sup>36</sup> H. Yelmen, “Kazlıçeşme,” in *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1994), 4:512–14.

<sup>37</sup> Evliya Efendi, *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. J. von Hammer (London, 1850), 1.2:29–30. I am indebted to Antony Greenwood for this reference.

realistic forms. The goose has a plump well-rounded body, but the wing feathers are rendered by means of a shallow surface decoration of stylized dartlike forms, which are terminated on the right by a curved border of drilled holes framed by buttonlike discs (Fig. 8). The combination of these forms is characteristic of Byzantine rather than Ottoman carvings. Among dated Byzantine works, for example, they can be found in the early-tenth-century sculptures from the church of Constantine Lips, the Fenari Isa Camii in Constantinople.<sup>38</sup> Here, we can compare a plump bird with the characteristic dartlike decoration of the upper wing feathers (Fig. 9), a peacock with a similar treatment of the wing feathers and with the buttonlike discs framing the drilled holes that represent the "eyes" of the tail (Fig. 10),<sup>39</sup> and an eagle with a curved band of drilled holes defining the upper segment of the wing, as in the carving of the goose (Fig. 11).<sup>40</sup>

Such similarities with the sculptures from the church of Constantine Lips, and also with other Byzantine carvings of the eleventh century, show that the marble relief now incorporated into the fountain is certainly not Turkish.<sup>41</sup> But what was its original purpose? The height of the two interlocking panels makes them unsuitable to have served as parapet slabs. Indeed, it is possible that they were created to serve as part of a fountain in the first place, since, from the Roman period onward, sculptures of geese and ducks had been associated with gardens and with fountains. Examples include a pair of bronzes that decorated the peristyle garden of the House of the Vettii at Pompeii. Each bronze depicted a boy holding a large duck, from whose beak a stream of water jetted into a basin set between the two statues.<sup>42</sup> From the late antique period there is a bronze statue of a goose, probably dating from the third or fourth centuries A.D. that was said to have been found in the Hippodrome at Constantinople and is now in the British Museum (Fig. 12). To judge from the holes pierced in the end of the bird's beak and under its tail, this sculpture also was used as part of a fountain.<sup>43</sup>

Where did the marble goose of the Kazlı Çeşme originally come from? The simplest suggestion is from the park of the Aretai, on this very site. We know from the poem of John Geometres that the park of the Aretai was graced with "fountains, pools, and their myriad devices," and with sculptures.<sup>44</sup> But, of course, it is also possible that these marbles, large and heavy though they are, could have been moved here from elsewhere,

<sup>38</sup>On these sculptures, see A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IVe-Xe siècle)* (Paris, 1963), 100–122, pls. 47–56; T. Macridy, "The Monastery of Lips and the Burials of the Palaeologi," *DOP* 18 (1964): 253–77, esp. 262–65, figs. 17–21, 31–83; C. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, "Additional Notes," *DOP* 18 (1964): 304–9, figs. 8–39.

<sup>39</sup>Mango and Hawkins "Additional Notes," 307, fig. 13.

<sup>40</sup>Macridy, "The Monastery of Lips," 259, fig. 18.

<sup>41</sup>For similar plant forms, with thick rounded stems and a raised ridge at the center of each lobe of the five-lobed leaves, see the relief of an eagle seizing a deer now in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin (no. 3250); A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge*, vol. 2, *XIe–XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1976), 95–96, no. 80, pl. 64b. For the dartlike wing feathers, compare a relief of an eagle seizing a rabbit in the Byzantine Museum, Athens (no. 157); *ibid.*, 67, no. 56, pl. 35a.

<sup>42</sup>W. K. Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius* (New York, 1979), 35–36, fig. 54.

<sup>43</sup>D. Buckton, ed., *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture*, exh. cat., British Museum (London, 1994), 44, no. 22.

<sup>44</sup>κρήναι, λίγναι, τέχναι δὲ τούτων μυρίαί. Ed. Cramer, 277, lines 5, 21–25.

and the evidence of coincidences should not be pushed too far. At the least, it can be proposed that the marbles of the Ottoman fountain probably did once decorate a Byzantine fountain in or near Constantinople.

The second pair of imperial gardens that I will consider, the Mesokepion and the Mangana, were inside the walls of the city. The Mesokepion was incorporated into the Great Palace. As is well known, the Great Palace was constructed on a series of terraces that descended the hill in steps from the level of the Hippodrome and Hagia Sophia, about 31 meters above sea level, down to the level of the shore. Some of the retaining walls of these terraces still survive among the houses of the modern city. The recent investigations of Eugenia Bolognesi have distinguished a total of six levels of terraces, at approximately 5-meter intervals.<sup>45</sup> The Mesokepion was evidently built on one of the lower levels, in the eastern portion of the palace, although its exact location has not yet been determined.<sup>46</sup>

Unusually precise descriptions of the Mesokepion survive in the text of Theophanes Continuatus. While relating the building activities of Theophilos on the eastern side of the Great Palace, this text describes a terrace that he set up, "facing the north," from which one could see the old polo grounds (*tsoukanisterion*). The text adds that the old polo ground "occupied the area upon which the glorious emperor Basil erected the New church, the two fountains, and the enclosed garden," that is, the Mesokepion.<sup>47</sup> These constructions of Basil I are described in a lengthy passage of the *Vita Basilii*, which takes us through the atrium of the Nea, with its two resplendent fountains of porphyry and Sangarian marble,<sup>48</sup> through the church itself, and finally through the porticoes that extended eastward from the church on its north and south sides as far as a new polo-ground that Basil constructed to replace the old one. The text describes one of the two porticoes, which was reached through the north door of the church, as a *peripatos*, or covered walk, but the other portico, which was reached through the church's southern, sea-facing door, is called a *diaulos*, or double course or promenade. The new polo field was evidently on the edge of the palace complex, because the text specifies that the emperor had to expropriate and demolish houses in order to build it.<sup>49</sup> According to the *Vita Basilii*, the emperor turned the space enclosed between the two porticoes linking the east of the Nea with the new pologround into a garden, "which, on account of its position, we are wont to call Mesokepion." The text describes the garden conventionally as "abounding in every kind of plant and irrigated with abundant water."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> E. Bolognesi, "The Great Palace Survey: The First Season," *Arastırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* 11 (1993): 19–21.

<sup>46</sup> On the position of the Nea and its complex, which included the Mesokepion, see, most recently, C. Mango, "The Palace of Marina, the Poet Palladas and the Bath of Leo VI," in Εὐφρόσυνον. Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Μανώλη Χατζηδάκη, ed. E. Kypraiou, 2 vols. (Athens, 1991), 1:321–30, esp. 323. A general survey of the texts can be found in Janin, *Constantinople*, 118–19, 390; idem, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, vol. 1, *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*, pt. 3, *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), 361–64.

<sup>47</sup> τὸ . . . ἡλιακὸν ὑπ' ἐκείνου καταβεβλημένον κατὰ πρόσωπον τοῦ βορρᾶ, ἐξ οὗ δὴ ὥρᾳτο καὶ τὸ παλαιὸν τζου-κανιστήριον, ἐκεῖσε τηνικαῦτα τυγχάνον, ἔνθα καὶ ἡ Νέα ἔκτισται Ἐκκλησία καὶ αἱ δύο φάλαι εἰσὶν καὶ τὸ μεσοκήπιον ὑπὸ Βασιλείου τοῦ αἰοδίου γεγόμενα βασιλέως. Bonn ed., 144, trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972), 163.

<sup>48</sup> On these fountains, see the discussion by Littlewood, "Gardens of the Palaces," 31–32.

<sup>49</sup> Bonn ed., 327–29, trans. Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 194–95.

<sup>50</sup> παράδεισον . . . παντοίοις κομώντα φυτοῖς καὶ ὕδασιν ἀφθόνοις ὄντα κατάρρυτον. Bonn ed., 329; trans. Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 195.

From these passages it is evident that the Mesokepion was entirely enclosed, on the north and the south sides by porticoes, on the west by the church, and presumably on the east by the back wall of the pologround, since the gardeners would not have wanted the polo balls among the plantings. In addition, since it was situated in the area formerly occupied by the old pologround, it was overlooked on its south side by the terrace built by Theophilos. This may be the explanation for the term *diaulos* used for the southern portico, the one on the side toward the sea, for this portico may have had two walkways—not side by side, but on two levels, that of the upper terrace and that of the garden itself.

Some confirmation for this layout is provided by the instructions contained in the *Book of Ceremonies*, despite the usual difficulties in interpretation arising when this text is used to reconstruct topography. It is clear from several passages that the Nea was situated on one of the terraces at a lower level. The instructions for the feasts of St. Elias and of the dedication of the Nea, for example, speak of the imperial procession's descending from the terrace of the church of the Pharos by means of two flights of stairs to reach the narthex of the Nea. After a circuit of the church, the sovereigns arrive in the "narthex on the side of the sea," that is, in the southern narthex. From there the sovereigns, in the words of the text, "pass through that narthex and the secret stairs that are there, and by way of the uppermost terrace of that narthex they enter the palace."<sup>51</sup> This passage seems to confirm that there was indeed an upper-level terrace on the south side of the Nea, which was accessible by stairs from the lower storey of the church.

In summary, the Mesokepion was a small, secluded garden, an enclosed paradise that must, to some extent, have had the appearance of a sunken garden, especially when viewed from the southern terrace. It was, therefore, in the tradition of such Roman imperial gardens as the long sunken garden on the east side of the Palatine in Rome, which was surrounded by porticoes on two levels (Fig. 13).<sup>52</sup> The whole situation of the Mesokepion was vividly evoked by John Geometres in a prose ekphrasis of his own small garden in Constantinople. John Geometres praises his private paradise because it was easily accessible from his house, and not sunk into the ground, like many other gardens: "It is not necessary to wind through many labyrinths, nor to go up and down many stairs, in order to discover a garden hidden, or rather buried, somewhere under the ground, as I know is the fate of many gardens, so that a toiling [visitor] would sink with exhaustion before reaching those plants withering in their sick-beds."<sup>53</sup> It is tempting to see this passage as a reference to the Mesokepion itself, with its tortuous access through covered corridors and twisting staircases, far below the upper levels of the palace.

The next garden to be considered, the expansive landscape that surrounded the

<sup>51</sup> ἐκβαίνοντες εἰς τὸν πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν νάρθηκα . . . οἱ δεσπότες διέρχονται μυστικῶς διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ νάρθηκος καὶ τοῦ ἐκεῖσε μυστικοῦ ἀναβασίου, καὶ διὰ τοῦ ἀνωτάτου ἡλιακοῦ τοῦ αὐτοῦ νάρθηκος εἰσέρχονται οἱ δεσπότες εἰς τὸ παλάτιον. Ed. A. Vogt, *Le Livre des Cérémonies* (Paris, 1935), 1: chap. 28, pp. 108–9; chap. 29, pp. 111–12.

<sup>52</sup> J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1981), 83, fig. 37.

<sup>53</sup> ὁ δὲ προβέβληται μὲν καὶ οὐ δεῖ πολλοὺς μὲν λαβυρίνθους διελιχθέντα, πολλὰς δ' ἀνελθόντα ἢ κατελθόντα κλίμακας οὕτω που ἐν καταγαίοις κατακεκρυμμένον, μᾶλλον δὲ κατορωυγμένον, τὸν κήπον εὐρεῖν—ὁ πολλοὺς οἶδα τῶν κήπων ἐγὼ πάσχοντας—ὥστε πονοῦντά τινα πρότερον ἀπειπεῖν ἢ τοῖς φυτοῖς ἐκεῖνοις οἷα κατακεκλιμένοις καὶ τεταριχευμένοις σώμασιν ἐντυχεῖν. A. R. Littlewood, ed., *The Progymnasmata of Ioannes Geometres* (Amsterdam, 1972), 11, no. 3, with commentary on p. 55. See also A. R. Littlewood, "Gardens of Byzantium," *Journal of Garden History* 12.2 (1992): 126–53, esp. 143.



monastery of St. George of the Mangana, could not have been more different from its secluded neighbor, the Mesokepion. The monastery of St. George of the Mangana was a foundation of Constantine IX Monomachos, who constructed an extensive complex that also included a large palace and a hospital.<sup>54</sup> These buildings were set in expansive grounds, which extended from north to south at least 800 meters between the ramparts of the Seraglio, on the west, and the sea wall on the east (Fig. 14). Unlike the Aretai and the Philopation, the Mangana has preserved its landscaped aspect to the present day. According to Clavijo, who visited the monastery in 1402, at that time the church was still surrounded by gardens.<sup>55</sup> The Turkish sultans replaced the Byzantine structures with belvedere pavilions, and they built a zoo on the western side of the garden, under the southern end of the Topkapı complex.<sup>56</sup> However, they kept the terracing of the Byzantine gardens, as seen in an early-nineteenth-century plan (Fig. 15).<sup>57</sup> Today the site is a well-tended military base.

In his chronography, Psellos provides a lengthy description of the gardens laid out by Constantine Monomachos at the Mangana, and also mocks the emperor's passion for landscaping, including the transplanting of mature fruitbearing trees and of turf for lawns.<sup>58</sup> According to Psellos, the whole complex of the Mangana was enclosed by a wall. Inside, there were buildings with covered galleries for walking, meadows filled with flowers, both on the perimeter of the estate and in its center, and groves of trees, some suspended in the air, others set on the flat ground below. There were extensive waterworks, including canals irrigating the lawns, basins, and graceful baths filled with water. The whole area, according to Psellos, was suitable for horseback riding; the eye could not see the boundaries of it, nor take in all of the meadows that were enclosed.<sup>59</sup> Psellos's account has an ironic, or even satirical, tone, mocking the extravagances of an emperor who tried to create a *rus in urbe*. One is reminded of the descriptions by Suetonius and Tacitus of the Golden House of Nero, with its long galleries and pools, its fields and woods, its open spaces and vistas, all within the city of Rome.<sup>60</sup> Thus we might suspect that Psellos's portrait of Constantine IX, like the *Vita Basilii's* portrait of Michael III, is making a rhetorical comparison between the emperor and the excesses of Nero.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, we may be tempted to dismiss Psellos's account of the gardens of the Mangana as overstated and inaccurate. The suspicion that Psellos was indulging in literary exaggeration is heightened by the denouement of his story of Constantine IX. According to Psellos, the emperor caught a fatal chill while bathing in a pool dug in the middle of a meadow in one of his gardens, and thus, by a poetic justice, Constantine Monomachos

<sup>54</sup>For a survey of the literary sources, see Janin, *Églises*, 70–76. On the excavations, see R. Demangel and E. Mamboury, *Le Quartier des Manganes* (Paris, 1939). See also Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, 136–38 and plan on p. 497; H. Tezcan, *Topkapı Sarayı ve Çevresinin Bizans Devri Arkeolojisi* (Istanbul, n.d.).

<sup>55</sup>Janin, *Églises*, 74.

<sup>56</sup>G. Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 201–4.

<sup>57</sup>The plan is found in A. Melling, *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople* (Paris, 1819).

<sup>58</sup>*Chronographia*, 6.173–75, 186–87, 201, ed. E. Renauld (Paris, 1926), 2:56–57, 62–63, 70.

<sup>59</sup>*Chronographia*, 6.186–87, ed. Renauld, 2:62–63.

<sup>60</sup>Suetonius, *Nero*, 31; Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.42.

<sup>61</sup>On Michael III and Nero in the *Vita Basilii*, see R. J. H. Jenkins, "Constantine VII's Portrait of Michael III," *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques, Académie Royale de Belgique*, 5th ser., 34 (1948): 71–77.

became the only Byzantine emperor to die as a result of his obsession with landscape architecture.<sup>62</sup>

In the case of the Mangana, however, we can check some of Psellos' statements against the existing evidence of the site, and we discover that his overall characterization of the gardens was no more than the truth. The site has two main levels. The lower level is about 250 meters wide at the southern end, but narrows to a point toward the north (Fig. 14). This area is bordered by the sea wall on the east and by a high terrace wall on the west. The monastery and the palace were built on this lower level, close to the sea wall. The terrace wall on the west is massive and contains recessed brickwork at several points in its construction. The recessed brick technique, in which alternate courses of bricks were set back and covered with mortar, is generally dated between the late tenth and the mid-thirteenth centuries.<sup>63</sup> It is used extensively in the substructures of the church of St. George and the palace. Therefore, the portions of the terrace wall that are built in this technique probably date to the time of Constantine Monomachos. Figure 16, for example, is a view of the southern end of the terrace, corresponding to the portion marked A on the plan in Figure 14. Here, the top one-third to one-half of the wall has extensive areas of recessed brick masonry, together with later repairs in stone. This wall extended more than 600 meters to the north, where there are still traces of recessed brick masonry, as can be seen in Figure 17 (B on the plan in Fig. 14).

There are remains of two substantial cisterns built against the terrace wall toward its southern end (C and D in Fig. 14). Although these cisterns appear to be of early Byzantine date, the southern one (C) shows traces of medieval repairs.

The upper terrace that is created by this wall measures about 190 meters in width at its southern end, and narrows to a point at the north. It is enclosed on the west side by the wall that supports the Topkapı Palace and its forecourt (E in Fig. 14); this wall, also, shows traces of recessed brickwork, behind the arcades of the Ottoman zoo, which was later built in front of the wall, at its southern end. It also served as the western boundary of the Mangana gardens.

Even this brief and incomplete survey of what can still be seen on the site of the Mangana shows that the description by Psellos was essentially accurate. The gardens were indeed laid out on two levels, with the upper terrace still providing space for groves of trees that appear to be "suspended in the air," as Psellos put it (Fig. 16). There are the large cisterns, which provided water for the canals and the baths. On the lower level, there is a flat area suitable for horseback riding along the sea walls (Fig. 18). This area was still used for equestrian sports during the Ottoman period.<sup>64</sup> And most of all, the whole site, as defined by the lower terrace wall with its recessed brickwork, was extremely long. The site has the shape of an elephant's tusk, curving to the west along the line of the cliff at its northern end (Fig. 14). Hence, it is indeed impossible to see the whole extent of the garden from either of its ends; Psellos did not exaggerate on this point either.

It is evident that the garden of the Mangana presented a striking contrast with the

<sup>62</sup>*Chronographia*, 6.201–2, ed. Renault, 2:70–71.

<sup>63</sup>R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. (Harmondsworth, 1986), 354, 504–5 n. 3.

<sup>64</sup>Necipoğlu, *Topkapı Palace*, 206.

Mesokepion inside the Great Palace. Whereas the Mesokepion was small and confined, the Mangana was expansive and open. The Mesokepion was situated below the main part of the palace, so that one looked down into it; the gardens of the Mangana, on the other hand, rose on a high terrace *above* the palace, so that one looked up at them, hanging in the air. From this comparison we can get a sense of the variety of designs that were possible in Byzantine landscape architecture.

We have seen, then, that there are sufficient points of convergence between the literary descriptions and the physical fabric of the city to demonstrate that the texts were anchored in reality; they were not purely figments of their authors' imaginations. The relationship of the park of the Aretai to the hexagonal first tower of the land walls, the secret confinement of the Mesokepion, the openness of the terraced gardens of the Mangana—all of these features, which are described in the texts, conform to what can still be seen today in the modern city. However, as I proposed at the beginning, the descriptions reflected not only the gardens themselves, but also the changing attitudes of the observers. I would like to conclude this paper, therefore, with two brief examples, one late antique and one medieval, of how each observer's state of mind could color his response to a similar view.

My first witness is the fourth-century description by the emperor Julian of a small estate and garden that he owned in Bithynia.<sup>65</sup> This property, which he had been given by his grandmother, was situated near Constantinople, about three kilometers from the sea. In a letter, Julian describes it as a delightful place, with excellent springs of water, a charming bath, a garden, and trees. The estate had a hill that offered fine prospects of the sea, the Propontis, the islands, and the city of Constantinople. Presumably, therefore, the estate was situated somewhere on the rising ground above the modern district of Maltepe, overlooking Princes' Islands to the south and the city to the west. Julian recalls with nostalgia the pleasant experience of looking upon these views: "Very peaceful it is to lie down there and glance into some book, and then, while resting one's eyes, it is very agreeable to gaze at the ships and the sea. When I was still hardly more than a boy, I thought that this was the most delightful summer place. . . ." <sup>66</sup>

Julian's delight in the views to be obtained from his country estate is a topos of Roman and late Roman garden descriptions. From Cicero to Basil the Great, a standard element in the praise of a villa or an estate was the pleasure to be obtained from gazing at its surrounding scenery, whether it was the sea, a river, or the countryside.<sup>67</sup>

Over eight centuries later, on the eve of the Fourth Crusade, a Byzantine churchman, Nikolaos Mesarites, also gazed upon the city of Constantinople and the sea, but his response to these views, in spite of some superficial similarities, was fundamentally different from that of the fourth-century emperor. Mesarites begins his long ekphrasis of the church of the Holy Apostles by praising its situation, which is in the heart of the city.

<sup>65</sup>Letter 25, trans. W. C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, 3 vols. (London–New York, 1923–53), 3:76–80.

<sup>66</sup>ἡσυχία δὲ πολλὴ κατακλινομένων καὶ εἰς τι βιβλίον ἀφορῶντι, εἴτα διαναπαύοντι τὴν ὄψιν ἡδιστον ἀπιδεῖν εἰς τὰς ναῦς καὶ τὴν θάλατταν. τοῦτο ἔμοι μαιρακίῳ κομιδῇ νέῳ θερίδιον ἐδόκει φίλτατον. *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>67</sup>A. R. Littlewood, "Ancient Literary Evidence for the Pleasure Gardens of Roman Country Villas," in *Ancient Roman Villa Gardens*, ed. E. B. MacDougall (Washington, D.C., 1987), 9; H. Maguire, "Paradise Withdrawn," in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Byzantine Garden Culture*.

Mesarites stresses, however, that the Holy Apostles is not “in the middle of confusion,” and “jostled by the mob” like “the rest of the churches,” but rather lies in the peaceful environs of well-watered gardens.<sup>68</sup> There is still an echo of this setting today, in the formal gardens that currently surround the Fatih, the mosque that replaced the Holy Apostles. Mesarites describes the gardens around the church with copious borrowings from Libanius’ encomium of Antioch, but he concludes his praises with a significant passage that is *not* lifted from the fourth-century author.<sup>69</sup> Here, Mesarites explains that the people living near the Holy Apostles can grow enough food in their gardens to make them independent of supplies from the outside: “People from whom this church is far distant can see from afar the wheat being brought in; for those who live near it, the wheat alone which grows in the land about their houses is sufficient for their nourishment, and they need have no care for invasions of barbarians, for the mighty waves of the sea, [or] for the dangers from pirates. . . .”<sup>70</sup>

Immediately after this passage comes Mesarites’ description of the view to be obtained from the upper levels of the church, to which I have already referred in discussing the Philopation.<sup>71</sup> Mesarites’ reactions to the scenery are expressed in a kind of collage, made up of quotations from Libanius and passages of his own devising. The view of the medieval writer is distinctly ambivalent. At first Mesarites, like Julian, seems to delight in the prospect of the sea that is spread before his eyes. “A man who walks about in the upper galleries of the church,” he says, “enjoys a varied pleasure as he gazes over the backs of the northern and southern seas. For one can see from there the sea, which itself lies there tranquilly and on its back bears freight ships before a fair breeze, a sweet sight to all men and a source of rejoicing and pleasure.”<sup>72</sup>

But then comes a note of fear, as Mesarites continues, “And neither is he [the viewer] frightened by the floods which the sea is wont to spew up, now here, now there, because he stands at a fitting distance from it, nor does he hear the groans of the sailors or the cries of drowning men.”<sup>73</sup>

Although many parts of this description of the waters surrounding Constantinople were taken from Libanius, Mesarites chose and framed his quotations so as to emphasize the theme of the dangers coming from the sea, which had colored his previous paragraph.

Certainly, Mesarites followed the conventions of ekphrasis by describing the views before him in terms of oppositions and by borrowing heavily from ancient writers. At the same time, he expressed the concerns of his own epoch, the heightened threats of barbar-

<sup>68</sup> *Description*, 3.1–4.3, ed. and trans. Downey, 862–63, 897–98.

<sup>69</sup> The borrowings from Libanius have been identified by Downey, 862, note III, 1.

<sup>70</sup> τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοις, ὅσοις ὁ νεὼς οὗτος ἀφεστηκώς ἐστὶ, μήκοθεν ἔστιν ἰδεῖν καὶ τὸν σῖτον εἰσκομιζόμενον, τοῖς δ’ ἔγγιστα τούτου μόνος ὁ ἐκ τοῦ τῶν δωματίων περιχώρου οἶδεν ἀρκεῖν πρὸς διατροφήν, καὶ οὐτ’ ἐθνῶν τούτοις μέλει ἐπιδρομή, οὐ τρικυμία θάλασσης, οὐ κίνδυνοι πειρατῶν. *Description*, 4.2, ed. and trans. Downey, 863, 898.

<sup>71</sup> See above, note 16.

<sup>72</sup> καρπούται δὲ καὶ ποικίλην τινὰ χαρμονὴν ὁ περὶ τὰ τοῦ ναοῦ δίωροφα ἐμφιλοχωρῶν καὶ πρὸς θαλάττης βορινῆς καὶ νοτίου νῶτα ἐπεντρανίζων· ἔστι γὰρ ἐκεῖθεν ἰδεῖν θάλασσαν τε γαλινιώσαν αὐτὴν καὶ πρὸς νῶτα ταύτης φερομένην ὀλκάδα δι’ οὐρίου τοῦ πνεύματος, ἡδὺ δὲ τοῦτο τοῖς ἅπασι θέαμα καὶ θυμηδία καὶ τερπωλή. *Description*, 5.1, ed. and trans. Downey, 864, 898.

<sup>73</sup> καὶ οὐτε πρὸς τὰς ἐπικλύσεις, ὅποσας περ ἄλλοτε ἄλλως οἶδεν ἀπερεύγεσθαι θάλασσα, σεσόβηται ποτε τῷ διεστάναι ταύτης συμμέτρως, οὐτε τὰς τῶν ναυτῶν οἰμωγὰς ἐπάει καὶ τῶν καταποντιζομένων τοὺς κωκυτοὺς. *Description*, 5.2, ed. and trans. Downey, 864, 898.

ian attack, the resurgence of piracy after the middle of the twelfth century, the uncertainty of food supplies.<sup>74</sup> Mesarites' view of the gardens around the Holy Apostles and of their setting was tinged by the circumstances of his time; for him, the crowning feature of the gardens was their self-sufficiency. His view of Constantinople and its maritime setting was more anxious, inward looking, and closed to the outer world than that of Julian.

In conclusion, the Byzantine descriptions of gardens, parks, and scenery may be read on two levels. They can still serve as useful factual records of the lost physical landscapes of Byzantium; at the same time, they reveal the changing mental landscapes of the Byzantine beholder.

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<sup>74</sup>On the recent pirate attacks, see Downey, 863, note IV, 2.